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ACTION EA-15

INFO OCT-01 EUR-20 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07 L-04 NSAE-00
NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 USIA-12 UPW-01 O-03
OPR-02 SY-03 OC-06 CCO-00 IO-13 AID-28 RSR-01 /158 W
007644

P R 130150Z MAR 70
FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 262
INFO CINCPAC 83
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY MANILA
DIA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *Trubley* DATE *10/9/80*
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 249

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN SITREP

1. AS OF 1300 MARCH 13 SITUATION IN PHNOM PENH APPEARS RELATIVELY CALM. MAIN EVENTS IN LAST 24 HOURS HAVE BEEN:

A. SACKING OF LARGE VIETNAMESE PHARMACY WHICH BELIEVED BY CAMBODIANS TO BE ONE OF PRINCIPAL FUNNELS MEDICAL EQUIPMENT TO NVN/VC;

B. ATTACK ON MEKONG JEWELRY STORY, FOREMOST SUCH ESTABLISHMENT IN PHNOM PENH AND WHICH BEGONS TO COL. OUM MANOURINE, BUT WHICH WAS SAVED BY POLICE;

C. COMPLETE CONFUSION OVER PRINCE SIHANOUK'S RETURN. WAS CONFIDENTLY EXPECTED MARCH 13 AT 1235 COMING FROM HONG KONG BUT IN VIEW VARIOUS FOREIGN BROADCASTS IT APPEARS RETURN PUT OFF FOR SOME DAYS. MEANWHILE, STREETS DECKED WITH FLAGS AND PROMINENT FEATURES INCLUDING CENTER STRIPE PRINCIPAL ROADS REPAINTED DURING NIGHT IN PREPARATION RETURN.

D. WHILE FRENCH LANGUAGE PRESS SEEMS TO BE ADOPTING SLIGHTLY

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LESS STRIDENT ANTI-VC TONE AND ADAPTING PARTLY TO SIHANOUK'S CONDEMNATION OF EMBASSY SACKING, VERNACULAR PRESS IS CONTINUING HARDLINE. LATTER MAINTAINS OPPOSITION TO PHAM VAN DONG VISIT, IN SOME CASES IS OPENLY CRITICAL FORMER SIHANOUK POLICIES AND DEMANDS REMOVAL NVN/VC FORCES.

E. NVN/VC CHANCERIES APPEAR RE-OCCUPIED BY OWNERS.

F. THIS MORNING A CAMBODIAN APPEARED AT EMBASSY WITH WHAT APPEARED BE GENUINE (THOUGH SOMEWHAT BURNED) 100 DOLLAR BILL. OBVIOUSLY PICKED UP IN SACKING ONE OF EMBASSIES. WANTED KNOW WHERE COULD CHANGE SAME. REFUSED LEAVE IT WITH EMBASSY WHEN TOLD WE HAD NO MEANS CHANGE.

RI, EB
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2. WHILE FULL STORY STILL UNCLEAR AND MAY NEVER BE, WE ARE SWINGING MORE TO THE VIEW THAT, WHILE VIOLENCE OF DEMONSTRATIONS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ON PROGRAM, ENTIRE SCENARIO WHICH NOW CULMINATING WITH DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL NVN/VC TROOPS WITHIN 48 HOURS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN PLANNED BY RKG WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE IF NOT PARTICIPATION OF PRINCE SIHANOUK. HOWEVER INCREDIBLY MACHIAVELLIA THIS MAY APPEAR, THERE ARE CERTAIN FACTS WHICH SUPPORT THIS.

A. AS HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN POINTED OUT, THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY CAMPAIGN OF INCREASING INTENSITY AGAINST NVN/VC PRESENCE IN CAMBODIA FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR.

B. IT IS EASY TO ASSUME THAT GENERAL LON NOL WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM FRANCE AND HAD SEEN SIHANOUK, BROUGHT BACK INSTRUCTIONS FOR OR APPROVAL OF FURTHER MEASURES AGAINST THE NVN/VC. GRANTING THE CORRECTNESS OF THE GENERAL CONSENSUS IN PHNOM PENH THAT LON NOL IS COMPLETELY FAITHFUL TO THE PRINCE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HIS BACKING THE PRESENT MOVES IF THEY WERE

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NOT KNOWN TO FORMER.

C. WHILE IT IS SOMEWHAT EXTRAORDINARY, MANY OBSERVERS HERE SEE A POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE IN THE FACT THAT THE SACKING OF THE PRG AND NVN EMBASSIES OCCURRED ON THE VERY SAME DAY SIX YEARS LATER THAT THE US AND UK EMBASSIES WERE SACKED. THE UK AMBASSADOR FEELS THAT THIS COULD BE A VERY TYPICAL SIHANOUK MOVE DESIGNED TO SHOW HIS IMPARTIALITY.

D. THE EXPLANATION OF SEEMING DIVERGENCE BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND PARIS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS POSSIBLY IS EXPLAINABLE BY THE FACT THAT THE SACKINGS PERHAPS WENT FURTHER THAN ANTICIPATED OR APPROVED BY THE PRINCE AND THAT PRIVATE HOMES ATTACKED AS WELL AS CHANCERIES. FURTHERMORE, MESSAGE (FOLLOWING TEL) SENT 12 MARCH BY LON NOL TO SIHANOUK EXPLAINING WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND STEPS TAKEN BY RKG MAY HAVE CALMED PRINCE SOMEWHAT.

E. TIMING OF PRINCE'S ABSENCE AND RETURN ARE ALSO TYPICAL SIHANOUK ACTIONS, WHEREBY HE CAN CLAIM COMPLETE INNOCENCE, BLAME ALLEGED RIGHTIST (WHOM HE HAS SINGLED OUT FOR LAST SIX MONTHS AT LEAST AS TROUBLEMAKERS), CONTINUE CLAIM UTTER FRIENDSHIP FOR ALL AND END UP AS NATIONAL HERO.

F. FINALLY, IF RKG AND PRINCE REALLY SERIOUSLY DIVIDED THIS ISSUE, IT SEEMS IMPROBABLE THAT RKG WOULD ALLOW HIM RETURN, MAKE PREPARATIONS WELCOME HIM, INCLUDING URGE POPULATION TURN-OUT.

3. WHILE WE MAY BE PROVED OVER-OPTIMISTIC, IT FAIR BET THAT AFTER GOOD DEAL OF TALKS, ACCUSATIONS, ETC., SOME SORT "ARRANGEMENT" WILL BE REACHED WITHIN RKG.

4. MUCH STILL DEPENDS ON NVN/VC, CHICOM AND SOVIET RELATIONS-- ESPECIALLY IN VIEW LOSS USEFULNESS CAMBODIAN SVN SITUATION (UNLESS OF COURSE CAMBODIANS PLAN USE PRESENT MOVE AS REASON FOR FUTURE CLAIMS NVN/VC NO LONGER IN COUNTRY WHICH WOULD MAKE FURTHER US/ARVN INCIDENTS MUCH MORE SERIOUS). DECISION INCREASE FARK BY 10,000 NOT ONLY SIGN OF RKG DETERMINATION BUT ALMOST BOUND BE TAKEN AS UNFRIENDLY ACT BY NVN/VC.
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